

From: Betsaida Alcantara/DC/USEPA/US
Sent: 2/1/2012 7:26:30 PM

To: Betsaida Alcantara/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Alisha Johnson/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Andra Belknap/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Arvin Ganesan/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Bob Perciasepe/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Bob Sussman/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Brendan Gilfillan/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; David Bloomgren/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Diane Thompson/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Jim Martin/R8/USEPA/US@EPA; Laura Vaught/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Richard Windsor/DC/USEPA/US@EPA; Shawn Garvin/R3/USEPA/US@EPA; Al Armendariz/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

CC:
Subject: AP: Reps. scrutinize EPA frack-pollution link in Wyo.

Reps. scrutinize EPA frack-pollution link in Wyo.

(AP) CHEYENNE, Wyo. — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in no way contends that a draft report on groundwater pollution in Wyoming could apply to hydraulic fracturing in any other part of the U.S., an EPA official told a U.S. House subcommittee.

That includes the Marcellus Shale, a vast area of booming gas drilling in Pennsylvania and other northeastern states, EPA Regional Administrator James Martin said Wednesday.

"The geologic conditions that exist with the Marcellus Shale are significantly different," Martin told the House Science Committee's energy and environment subcommittee, which held a hearing in Washington on the draft EPA report released Dec. 8.

The report theorized that gas industry activity including hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, may have caused groundwater pollution in the Wyoming community of Pavillion.

Petroleum companies frack their wells to improve the flow of oil and gas. The process involves pumping water, fine sand and a relatively small proportion of chemicals down well holes to fracture deposits and create new fissures.

More than 160 gas wells have been drilled in Pavillion. Some have been fracked as recently as 2005.

Pavillion residents have complained for years that their well water stinks of hydrocarbons, and in 2008 they asked the EPA to investigate. The EPA found suspect chemistry in two wells drilled to check for groundwater pollution.

Fracking in Pavillion occurred fairly close to where residents get their drinking water: As shallow as 1,200 feet below the surface in an area where the deepest water wells have been drilled to a depth of about 800 feet, Martin told the subcommittee.

That's quite different from the geology of the Marcellus Shale, where gas wells are 5,000 feet deep or more.

But Republican Rep. Ralph Hall, of Texas, said the Pavillion report is but one example of an anti-fracking agenda by EPA.

"It is important to recognize what EPA is doing in Wyoming is not isolated. They are going after fracking everywhere they can," Hall said.

Although the petroleum industry maintains there are no proven cases of fracking having polluted groundwater, some environmentalists have viewed the Pavillion report as justifying their worries about the practice.

A public health professor at the University of Pittsburgh, Bernard Goldstein, testified that he would support a fracking moratorium until better practices for fracking are put into place.

He said the U.S. sooner or later will extract its accessible onshore gas and there's no rush.

"It's not going anywhere," Goldstein said. "Unless the Canadians can figure out how to frack underneath Lake Erie, that's staying with us."

Other witnesses questioned the validity of the Pavillion study and the EPA's preliminary findings.

"Once misinformation gets out into the public, it takes on a life of its own and is almost impossible to correct," said Kathleen Sgamma, vice president of government and regulatory affairs for the Denver-based petroleum industry group Western Energy Alliance.

Wyoming's top state oil and gas regulator, Tom Doll, said the EPA consulted only minimally with his agency, the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, on research behind the report.

"We had significantly greater consultation with the state than perhaps Mr. Doll might be aware of," Martin said.

The EPA has extended a public comment period on the Pavillion report six more weeks through March 12. The agency also is seeking nominees for experts in backgrounds including petroleum engineering, geology, chemistry and hydrology to serve on an upcoming peer review panel for the report.

----- Original Message -----

From: Betsaida Alcantara

Sent: 02/01/2012 05:15 PM EST

To: Alisha Johnson; Andra Belknap; Arvin Ganesan; Bob Perciasepe; Bob Sussman; Brendan Gilfillan; David Bloomgren; Diane Thompson; Jim Martin; Laura Vaught; Richard Windsor; Shawn Garvin; Al Armendariz

Subject: AP: Oscar nominated filmmaker Joshua Fox arrested at House hearing, lacked credentials/ Reuters: Filmmaker arrested during House hearing on shale gas

Oscar nominated filmmaker Joshua Fox arrested at House hearing, lacked credentials

By Associated Press, Updated: Wednesday, February 1, 12:30 PM

WASHINGTON — An Oscar-nominated documentary filmmaker was arrested at a House hearing Wednesday after trying to film the proceedings without the required media credentials.

Joshua Fox of, Milanville, Pa., was led out of the room in handcuffs and charged by Capitol Police with unlawful entry.

Fox directed the anti-drilling documentary "Gasland," which was nominated last year for an Oscar. Fox also is an activist who has spoken out against hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, which was the subject of the House Science, Space and Technology subcommittee hearing.

Fracking takes place when large volumes of water, sand and chemicals are injected into wells to break up underground rock formations, allowing natural gas to escape.

The oil and gas industry has criticized Fox and his film for what they say is a sensationalized attack on fracking.

Democrats forced two votes, one to allow Fox to film the hearing and a second to recess the hearing for a week so that Fox could obtain credentials. Both motions were defeated on a party line vote.

Committee Republicans issued a statement saying that committee rules state, "Personnel providing coverage by the television and radio media shall be currently accredited to the Radio and Television Correspondents' Galleries."

"The individual removed was not accredited by the House Radio and TV Gallery and had refused to turn off his camera upon request by Capitol Police," the statement added.

The hearing was available for viewing on the committee's Internet site, which is routine practice for most congressional committees.

A Democrat on the committee, Rep. Zoe Lofgren of California, said Republicans were trying to hide

criticism of the Environmental Protection Agency.

She said, "If Republicans want to undermine the use of science at EPA they can't hide it from the American people because they have a right to know."

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Filmmaker arrested during House hearing on shale gas

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The director of a documentary that portrays shale gas production as dangerous was arrested and escorted out of a Republican-dominated Congressional hearing on Wednesday, touching off a dispute over public access to the hearing.

Capitol Police handcuffed Josh Fox, director of the Oscar-nominated documentary Gasland, and led him out of a House science committee room after he refused to stop filming.

Republicans in charge of committee said Fox did not have credentials to tape the hearing, which was already being broadcast live on the Internet.

The hearing focused on an Environmental Protection Agency draft report that found an aquifer in Wyoming was likely polluted by fluids from hydraulic fracturing, the drilling technique that was the subject of Fox's controversial Gasland documentary.

Rep. Brad Miller, the top Democrat on the science subcommittee, objected to the decision to eject Fox. He said Republicans had also blocked an ABC News crew from filming the hearing because they did not request to film in advance.

"All those rules are to control access," said Miller, who made a motion that "all God's children" be allowed to film the hearing.

Miller's motion delayed the hearing for nearly 50 minutes until the required number of lawmakers were present to vote on the motion.

The Gasland documentary has gained notoriety for a scene with flaming tap water. Shale gas supporters have said it was filled with inaccuracies and distorts the safety record of U.S. shale gas production.

Shale gas output has skyrocketed in recent years thanks to advances in hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. While innovations have sharply boosted production of U.S. natural gas, critics say the rapidly expanding development threatens drinking water and public health.

Since the release of Gasland, Fox has become a high-profile opponent of fracking, joining efforts to prevent drilling in the Delaware River Basin and working to get water to families in Dimock, Pennsylvania, who say their water has been tainted by drilling.

When the House hearing resumed, Republicans, who strongly support the natural gas drilling,

accused the EPA of basing its findings in Wyoming on politics and not science.

"In its single-minded pursuit of the hydraulic fracturing smoking gun, EPA appears to have lost focus on identifying the real causes and real solutions to drinking water quality problems in Pavillion, Wyoming," said Andy Harris, the top Republican on the subcommittee.

The EPA defended its work in Pavillion. EPA region 8 administrator Jim Martin stressed that its study was conducted under rigorous standards and the findings were limited to the unique geology in Pavillion and not meant to be applied to other places where drilling is occurring.

"EPA has acted carefully, thoughtfully, deliberately, and transparently in our ground water investigation and in sharing the data and findings contained in our draft report," Martin said.

(Reporting by Ayesha Rascoe; Editing by David Gregorio)